

Paragraph Checklist

- Form: ☐ Does your paragraph have a title?
☐ Did you write on the correct side of the paper?
☐ Did you indent?
☐ Did you write on every other line?
 (Refer to pages 4-5 for complete instructions)
- Topic Sentence: ☐ Does your topic sentence contain a controlling idea?
- Concluding Sentence: ☐ Does your paragraph have a concluding sentence?

WRITING UNDER PRESSURE

Choose one of your best topic sentences from Practice 3 on page 12 and write a paragraph six to ten sentences long on the subject of that sentence. Check your paragraph against the Paragraph Checklist before you hand it in.

Your instructor will give you a time limit. Suggested limits:

Writing Time — 13 minutes
 Checking Time — 2 minutes

Total — 15 minutes

Chapter 2

UNITY AND SIMPLE OUTLINING

Another important element of a good paragraph is unity.

Every good paragraph has unity, which means that in each paragraph, only *one* main idea is discussed. If you start to discuss a new idea, start a new paragraph. Furthermore, every supporting sentence in the paragraph must be directly related to the main idea. Do not include any information that does not directly support the topic sentence.

Uni- is a Latin prefix meaning "one." When we talk about paragraph unity, we mean that you should discuss only *one* main idea in each paragraph. For example, if your paragraph is about the advantages of a college education, discuss only that. Do not discuss the disadvantages in getting a college education. To make it even easier, discuss only *one* advantage in each paragraph, such as the ability to get a better job. However, sometimes it is possible to discuss two or even three aspects of the same idea in one paragraph *if they are closely related to each other*. For example, it is possible to discuss both "better job" and "better salary" in the same paragraph because they are closely related, but it is not a good idea to discuss both "better job" and "better general knowledge about the world" in the same paragraph because they are not so closely related.

The second part of unity is that every supporting sentence must *directly* explain or prove the main idea, which is stated in the topic sentence. Sometimes students write supporting sentences that are "off the topic." For example, if you are writing a paragraph about the high cost of college tuition, you could mention inflation as a factor. But if you write several sentences about inflation, you are getting "off the topic," and your paragraph will not have unity.

Study the two paragraphs below. Both paragraphs discuss the same topic. In your opinion, which paragraph has unity and which one doesn't? Explain how individual sentences break the unity either by introducing a new idea or by being "off the topic."

Model 4: Unity

Surviving Cancer

Progress is gradually being made in the fight against cancer. In the early 1900s, few cancer patients had any hope of long-term survival. In the 1930s, less than one in five cancer victims lived more than five years. In the 1950s, the ratio was one in four. Currently, the ratio is down to one in three. The gain from one in four to one in three represents about 58,000 lives saved each year.

Surviving Cancer

Progress is gradually being made in the fight against cancer. In the early 1900s, few cancer patients had any hope of long-term survival. But because of advances in medical technology, progress has been made so that currently one in three cancer patients survives. It has been proven that smoking is a direct cause of lung cancer. However, the battle has not yet been won. Although cures for some forms of cancer have been discovered, other forms of cancer are still increasing. Heart disease is also increasing.

Practice 5: Unity I

The following short essay has not been divided into paragraphs, but it should contain six: an introductory paragraph, four "body" paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.

STEP 1 Read the entire essay once or twice.

STEP 2 Decide where each new paragraph should begin. (Where does the author begin to discuss a different topic?)

STEP 3 Underline the first sentence of each paragraph.

Culture, Logic, and Rhetoric

- 1 Logic*, which is the basis of rhetoric, comes from culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, therefore, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture. The rhetorical system of one language is neither better nor worse than the rhetorical system of another language, but it is different. English logic and English rhetoric, which are based on Anglo-European cultural patterns, are linear*—that is, a good English paragraph begins with a general statement of its content and then carefully develops that statement with a series of specific illustrations. A good English paragraph may also use just the reverse sequence: it may state a whole series of examples and then summarize those examples in a single statement at the end of the paragraph. In either case, however, the flow of ideas occurs in a straight line from the opening sentence to the last sentence. Furthermore, a well-structured English paragraph is never digressive*. There is nothing that does not belong to the paragraph, and nothing that does not support the topic sentence. A type of construction found in Arabic and Persian writing is very different. Whereas English writers use a linear sequence, Arabic and Persian writers tend to construct a paragraph in a parallel sequence using many coordinators*, such as *and* and *but*. In English, maturity of style is often judged by the degree of subordination* rather than by the degree of coordination. Therefore, the Arabic and Persian styles of writing, with their emphasis on coordination, seem awkward and immature to an English reader. Some Asian writers, on the other hand, use an indirect approach. In this kind of writing, the topic is viewed from a variety of angles. The topic is never analyzed directly; it is referred to only indirectly. Again, such a development in an English paragraph is awkward and unnecessarily vague* to an English reader. Spanish rhetoric differs from English rhetoric in still another way. While the rules of English rhetoric require that every sentence in a paragraph relates directly to the central idea, a Spanish-speaking writer loves to fill a paragraph with interesting digressions. Although a Spanish paragraph may begin and end on the same topic, the writer often digresses into areas that are not directly related to the topic. Spanish rhetoric, therefore, does not follow

logic: way of thinking or reasoning
linear: in a straight line
digressive: wandering away from
the main topic
vague: unclear

coordinators: words that join equal elements
subordination: the joining of two unequal
elements

- 30 the English rule of paragraph unity. In summary, a student who has mastered the grammar of English may still write poor papers unless the rhetoric of English is also mastered. Also, the student may have difficulty reading an essay written by the rules of English rhetoric unless (s)he understands the "logical" differences from those of his/her own native tongue.¹

Practice 6: Unity II

- A. Each of the following paragraphs breaks the rule of unity because it contains one or more sentences that do not directly support the topic sentence.

STEP 1 Locate and underline the topic sentence of each paragraph.

STEP 2 Find the sentence(s) that do not support the topic sentence and cross them out.

Paragraph 1

- 1 Tourism is the state of Hawaii's leading industry. Every year, some 3.2 million tourists visit the islands. During the popular winter months, a planeload or shipload of tourists arrives every fifteen minutes. New hotels, new resorts, and new restaurants are being built every year to accommodate the increasing numbers of visitors. Sugar cane and pineapples are also important industries in Hawaii.

Paragraph 2

- 1 The rapid increase in crime in Chicago is causing a great deal of concern to the city's citizens. People are afraid to go out into the streets at night because they are afraid of being robbed or even killed. More and more families are moving out of the city into the suburbs* because of the high crime rate. The chief of police was fired last month because of his inability to reduce crime. People are buying strong locks for their doors and installing heavy iron bars across their windows to prevent burglaries. Some citizens are even purchasing guns to protect themselves and their property. Indeed, it seems that the increase in crime is turning the average home in Chicago into a prison for its inhabitants.

Paragraph 3

- 1 The convenience and economy of small cars account for their popularity. They are easy to park quickly and take smaller parking spaces. Small cars are also a means of conserving energy because they use less gas than big cars. Small cars are inconvenient and uncomfortable on long trips, however, because of their limited passenger and trunk space. They are also more economical to operate and maintain, and they cost less. Because of all these advantages, the next car I buy is going to be an Econo-Midget.

¹ Adapted from Robert B. Kaplan, "Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education," *Language Learning* 16 (1966), pp. 1-20. Used with permission of the publishers.

suburbs: small communities surrounding a large city

B. Each of the following paragraphs has not only two or more topic sentences but also irrelevant sentences.

STEP 1 Decide where each paragraph should be divided into two or more paragraphs. Underline the topic sentence of each.

STEP 2 Find the irrelevant sentence(s) and cross them out.

Paragraph 4

- 1 The recent water shortage in California forced changes in Californians' lifestyles. When water was rationed*, Californians learned to conserve water. They didn't water their lawns and gardens or wash their automobiles. Also, they took fewer showers and baths. The water shortage lasted two years. Californians also learned to recycle* and baths. For example, they used the rinse water from their washing machines to water
- 5 their houseplants and gardens. California's agricultural industry was also severely affected by the water shortage. Because their water was also rationed, farmers planted fewer acres* and had to plan their crops more carefully. Many farmers planted crops that required less water and reduced the number of crops that needed a lot of water. This eventually caused an increase in the price of food in supermarkets
- 10 all over the country.

Paragraph 5

- 1 The United States and Canada will someday join the 95 percent of the world that uses the metric rather than the English system of measurement. No longer will North American schoolchildren have to memorize that there are 12 inches in a foot, 3 feet in a yard, 5½ yards in a rod, 40 rods in a furlong, and 8 furlongs in a mile. Inches
- 5 will become centimeters, pounds will become kilograms, quarts will become liters, and degrees Fahrenheit will become degrees centigrade (also called Celsius). The English system of measurement has been used in English-speaking countries since about the year 1200. The conversion to the metric system will not be easy, however, and will require enormous amounts of money and time. Proponents* of the change
- 10 argue that it is necessary in order for North American products to compete in world markets with metric products. For example, every piece of machinery in every factory and every office will have to be replaced. Furthermore, every machine and tool that makes, repairs, or supplies another piece of equipment will have to be changed. Not only every nut, bolt, and screw, but also every wrench, drill, and screwdriver will
- 15 have to be replaced, as any auto mechanic who has tried to fix an imported car with a set of American tools realizes. Therefore, although the United States and Canada are committed to "going metric," it will not happen next week or even next year. Because of the magnitude* of the problems that metric conversion will involve, the change will have to be gradual and, above all, carefully planned.

rationed: limited in amount
recycle: use again
acre: unit of area (1 acre
= 4,047 square meters)

proponents: people in favor of something
magnitude: great size

Simple Paragraph Outlining

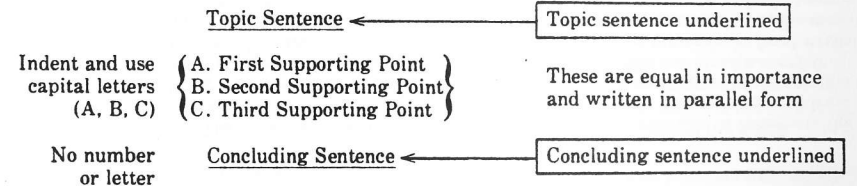
An outline is like an architect's plan for a house. An architect plans a house before it is built to make sure that all the parts will fit. Like an architect, you should plan a paragraph before you write it to make sure that all of your ideas will fit.

Learning to outline will improve your writing for three reasons. First of all, it will help you organize your ideas. Specifically, an outline will ensure that you won't include any irrelevant ideas, that you won't leave out any important points, and that your supporting sentences will be in logical order. Second, learning to outline will help you write more quickly. It may take some practice at first, but once you become used to outlining your ideas before you start to write, you will be surprised at how fast you will actually be able to write. Preparing an outline is 75 percent of the work. The actual writing becomes easier because you don't have to worry about what you are going to say; you already have a well-organized plan to follow. Finally, your grammar will improve because you will be able to concentrate on it, not on your thoughts or organization. Improved organization, speed, and grammar make learning to outline well worth the effort.

There are several different outline forms that can be used. The form used in this book is particularly helpful for students who have never practiced outlining before. However, your instructor may recommend a different form.

SIMPLE OUTLINES

A simple outline for a short paragraph might look like this:



Of course, the number of main supporting points (A, B, C) will vary widely from paragraph to paragraph. This particular paragraph has three main supporting points; others may have only two or as many as ten or even twenty. Also, some paragraphs may not have a concluding sentence, and in others, the topic sentence may not be the first sentence.

Model 5: Simple Paragraph Outlining

Study the simple outline below for the second paragraph on page 21. Then re-read the paragraph to see how the writer used this plan to write a well-organized paragraph that is easy to understand.

Learning to outline will improve your writing for three reasons.

- A. It will help you organize your ideas.
- B. It will help you write more quickly.
- C. It will help you improve your grammar.

For these three reasons—improved organization, speed, and grammar—learning to outline is well worth the effort.